1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

I

Tiwi Marriage

[p. 8 is blank]

Cultural Isolation

PEOPLE WHO LIVE in the congested cities and towns of the modern world have difficulty in realizing how different life can be at the hunting and gathering level of human existence. The basic fact about the life of hunters and gatherers is the thinly spread-out manner in which they live and the isolation of families and households from each other. In the case of the Tiwi, these conditions of isolation and dispersal were accentuated by their island habitat. Melville and Bathurst Islands lie off the northern coast of Australia some fifty to eighty miles from Darwin, which is the administrative capital of the empty north. They are separated from the mainland by about twenty-five miles of open sea at the narrowest part. This distance is slightly greater than the distance that separates England from France at the Straits of Dover, and just as the dim outline of coastal France can be seen from England on clear days, so the dim outline of the Australian mainland can be seen from the southern edges of the islands. However, Tiwi tradition is firm and certain that before the white man's arrival there was no contact between the islands and the mainland. To them, the dimly seen coastline of Australia was *Tibambinumi,* the home of the dead, to which all Tiwi souls went after death. It follows from this they they regarded the inhabited world as composed of their own two islands, and on those islands they lived a self-contained and exclusive existence. Occasionally outsiders appeared, either castaways from surrounding areas, including presumably the Australian mainland, and in recent centuries, fishing boats and pirates from Indonesia, loosely called "Malays" in the literature. To such visitors from outside, the Tiwi were consistently and implacably hostile. Their own traditions and what little written history there is of "Malay" penetration into the Arafura Sea both tell the same story. Outsiders who landed on the islands were massacred or vigorously resisted. Whether they were classified as *Malai-ui* ("Malays") or *Wona-rui*

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

tribe, owned also the country on the opposite side of Apsley Strait at the southeast corner of Bathurst, while the Malauila, the band in the northern half of Bathurst Island, conversely overlapped their ownership across the strait to take in a thin strip of coastline on the northwest corner of Melville.

These details illustrate the fact that the band was the land-owning, workaday, territorially organized group which controlled the hunting, the food supply, and the warfare. Until the white man arrived in force in the coastal waters of North Australia, the average Tiwi regarded the nine bands as the main functional units of his existence, and his loyalty to and identification with his band were given much greater opportunity for exercise than any loyalty to or identification with the whole Tiwi tribe. He did many things as a member of a band, but he did little as a member of a tribe. Only when an outsider turned up did he need to think of himself as a Tiwi, and outsiders were very rare. For the rest of the time he thought of himself as a member of his band, thought of his band as his people, and of his band territory as his country.

The Household

Since the band consisted of anything from one hundred to three hundred people, it could not live together in one place, except for very short periods of time. Hunting and gathering in almost any part of the world (except the northwest coast of America in pre-white times) require the human population to disperse itself very thinly over the countryside and live from day to day in small hunting and camping units. Such small primary groups are usually in one sense families and in another sense households, and this is the case among the Tiwi. We propose to call such units households rather than families for reasons that will soon become apparent. It is true that Tiwi "houses," especially in the long dry season (from March to October), were the flimsiest and most temporary of structures, but the group of people in question was the group who lived together day after day, hunted as a unit, pooled the results of their food getting, and ate and slept together. Functionally this group is identical with an American household, even though the "house" they used was nothing more than a few piled-up tree branches, used as shelter for a night or two and then abandoned. Like the American household also, the Tiwi household usually consisted of a man, his wife (or wives), and their children, though in many would also be included a few leftovers or extras, common to all cultures, such as bachelor uncles, visiting cousins, ancient widowers, and ambiguous "men who came to dinner" and were still there. (Tiwi households did not, however, include maiden aunts, female orphans, or ancient widows, since these could not exist in Tiwi culture.)

Thus the Tiwi household was more or less the same thing as the Tiwi family group, but Tiwi family organization had such a number of unusual twists that we find it desirable to insist upon calling such a group the house-

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

starvation level than was the case with many of the mainland tribes.[8] Even to talk about the Tiwi in near-starvation terms seems quite incongruous, for there was an abundance of native food available the whole year around and their only problem was to collect or catch it. We regard the development of their large multiple-wife household as essentially their own evolutionary solution to the problem of finding the most efficient unit of food production. Abundant food was there in the bush in its raw state; the most efficient way to extract it was by a work unit represented by such households as those of Ki-in-kumi, or Tu'untalumi, with the old remarried widows directing the young women and the hunting and fish spearing being done by the younger males.

Even the smallest households nearly always contained at least one old female veteran of the food quest who knew the bush like the palm of her hand and could wrestle some food out of the most inhospitable district. The only households that ever went hungry—and they only overnight or at worst for twenty-four hours or so—were the small households of only one or two wives, especially if both wives were young and inexperienced or young and flighty or both. Such households were uneconomic and were rare. On the other hand, the apparently absurd households such as those in which two young men shared their respective elderly mothers as wives, made good economic sense. Any attempt by two such young men to substitute two young wives or even four young wives for the two old ladies would have drastically reduced the standard of living of the household. When young wives arrived in Tiwi households they were not regarded as replacements for the old crones but joined as reinforcements and apprentices to the skilled workers—the veterans. The sexual aspects of marriage were necessarily subordinated to the housekeeping or food-production aspects, which is why in the previous section we spoke of every young man laying the foundation of his household by marrying an elderly widow usually long before there was any young wife in sight.

Since the bigger the household the more food it produced for its own consumption, there was a tendency for the smaller and therefore hungrier households to hang around the fringes of the bigger ones. Though every household was autonomous and could camp and collect food anywhere in the band territory in which it roamed, it was rare to find all the households in a band distributed evenly over the available territory. In Malau, Enquirio's household and that of Merapanui were usually to be found camped together, since the two men were full brothers and not in competition with each other. Also camped with or near them on any given occasion would be a few other small households. Such a combined group as this would, all told, amount to between forty and fifty people camping at the same spot and remaining together for weeks at a time. Under mainland conditions in most areas, a gathering of forty people for ten days at a time in the same locality was unheard of, except on

[8] As was pointed out earlier, the best-watered and most fertile areas of the mainland were the areas attractive to white settlement, and the tribes who inhabited such areas (for example, Victoria or coastal Queensland) were wiped out quickly. Most of the mainland tribes who survived long enough to be studied by modern anthropologists were tribes whose habitats were unfavorable both for native and for white occupation.

special rare ceremonial occasions, because of the poverty of the food supply. The prevalence of such large camps among the Tiwi supports our general thesis that their native food supply was, for Australia, unusually plentiful, and that, in this sense, the Tiwi were a "rich" Australian tribe.

When camped together thus, the various households kept their distance, with the main fires and shelters of each separated by some twenty or thirty yards from the others, and during the day when everybody (except the old men) was out food collecting, the camps were almost deserted. When the food gatherers returned in twos and threes in the late afternoon, each household would cook and eat at its own fires as a unit, but if they wished, members of the smaller households, in which food returns for the day were probably smaller per capita than those of the bigger households, would "drop in during supper" upon the latter and supplement their own slender meal. Such hospitality was always extended on an individual basis; some member of the bigger household, usually a senior wife, would offer to one of the visitors a piece of meat or a dish of *kwoka* and if rebuked by her husband she would justify her act by mentioning her own kin relationship to the visitor, as if to stress that the kindness was her own individual gesture and did not commit the whole household to friendliness. Heads of large households were, however, generally very permissive if such handouts were made by senior females of their household to women or children of other households; it was handouts to adult male outsiders, especially young male outsiders, that were likely to provoke snarls or reprimands from the old man. This was in line with the general hostility of all old men to all young unmarried men that ran through all aspects of Tiwi culture.

After darkness fell, such a camp, with three or four households all resting within easy hearing distance of each other, became highly animated with men visiting from fire to fire as the women, who were not encouraged to walk about after dark, gossiped around their own fires. Little productive work could be done after dark, though a few cooking chores and food-preparation activities were performed, and most people went to sleep early unless the shouted conversations from fire to fire earlier in the evening had started an argument. If an argument did arise, the participants might go on abusing each other at long range for hours, with many of the listeners becoming involved and the rest remaining awake to enjoy the row.

Such rows were almost invariably outgrowths of the constant suspicion with which older men regarded younger men. This suspicion was in turn part of the price the Tiwi had to pay for the efficient type of food-production unit that they had evolved. This production unit, to reach maximum economic efficiency, required the vast majority of all females to be concentrated in the households of a very small number of husbands; namely, the very oldest men. As a necessary correlate, men under twenty-eight had no wives at all and very few men under forty had any wife except elderly and physically very unattractive widows. The efficient economic organization thus obviously created a moral and social problem—the problem of how to keep the unmarried young men away from the young women. The old head of the household had a double role:

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

6

The Tiwi Today

Changes since 1930

[648] [747] [361 459] [361]

There was in 1929 only two year-round settlements of outsiders which were significant to the Tiwi. One was Bathurst Island Mission, by then nearly twenty years old, the only permanent white-man establishment on the islands. It acted as the main exit point for travel to Darwin, the other focus of Tiwi life. There was also the large camp of Mandiimbula and Yelmpi on the south coast of Melville Island, which owed its existence to the sexual arrangement between the Tiwi and Japanese pearlers.

In the 1930's, the centers of Tiwi activity shifted somewhat. The Australian government successfully broke up the camp located on the south coast by transporting nearly all of the Yelmpi to Darwin and by sending patrol boats out to discourage the Japanese from frequenting the area. In about 1935, the Japanese moved their base for contact with the Tiwi north to the region of Garden Point, at the northern end of Apsley Strait, just beyond the ruins of old Fort Dundas. Around the great fresh-water pool on the beach at that locality there developed a Tiwi camp like that which formerly had existed on the south coast; however, the native bands involved were no longer the Yelmpi and Mandiimbula but the Malauila, Munupula, Wilrangwila, and Turupula of northern Bathurst and Melville islands. The government again attempted to control sexual activities between Tiwi and Japanese, but to get to this spot a patrol boat from Darwin had to travel along forty miles of indented coastline which amplified and seemed to project every throb of an engine toward the ears of the Japanese miles away. The patrol boats found that they could not sneak up on the pearlers unannounced and, therefore, could not catch them in the act of cohabiting with native women.

By the late 1930's, pressure from missionary and other humanitarian circles in the southern part of Australia forced the government to attempt to terminate, or at least to control, the trade pattern which had become estab-

[p. 104 is blank]

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

months after the attack on Darwin. Many of the older Tiwi who were in Darwin during the bombing did not survive the war; the psychological strain and lack of sufficient food was too much for them. Genealogies show that an unusual number of deaths occurred among Tiwi between 1942 and 1946.

When Western food supplies again became available, the old Tiwi bush living seems to have departed. The Tiwi suddenly realized their full dependence upon the products which only the whites could provide. As the war came to an end and one after another of the temporary military bases were abandoned, the missionaries and the Tiwi salvaged what they could, transporting large amounts of corrugated iron to Bathurst Island Mission for native huts. The Tiwi were drawn together around the Mission in larger numbers than ever before, their camps ranging in a line along the Mission beach. The majority of the Tiwi, about 600, considered Bathurst Island Mission their home, although some of the young adult males spent most of the year in Darwin. About 30 islanders lived adjacent to the half-caste Melville Island Mission at Garden Point. Another 150 were permanently located at the government settlement at Snake Bay. The remaining Tiwi, about 150, were year-round residents of Darwin; over one hundred lived at Bagot Native Compound and at an unsupervised native camp at Point Gunn directly opposite the southernmost tip of Melville Island; the rest were inmates at the leper colony. The resulting total population of about 950, in 1954, is only about a hundred less than the figure of 1062 which Hart obtained in his census of 1928-29.

Marriage Arrangements

We have discussed how, under the traditional Tiwi pattern of life, the greatest energies of mature males were expended in bargaining with each other for new wives. The old social system was one which had as normal features prenatal and early childhood engagements for females, remarriage for all widows, considerable age difference between marriage partners, and polygamy. The new Catholic system introduced by Father Gsell outlawed, or at least discouraged, polygamous marriages, nuptial unions between persons of greatly differing ages, and all prenatal or childhood betrothals. As indicated, Father Gsell initiated his new policies by purchasing young females and then allowing them to choose their own partners from among their single agemates.

It is of interest to inspect the actual circumstances surrounding one of the earliest unions which took place under Father Gsell's supervision. About 1914, Polly, an attractive young female who had already had a rather checkered career, having been stolen by a Yuwatja male from her rightful mate, was "stolen back" by another Tiwi, Timalarua of the Rangwila. Polly, however, decided that she did not want an old husband like Timalarua, so she ran away to the sisters and Father Gsell. In time, old Timalarua allowed Father Gsell to buy this wife who did not want to live with him. Shortly afterward, Father Gsell asked Polly whom she wanted to marry. Polly named Cabbagee as the

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
O120 Tiwi O120

from their future sons-in-law and demands which look very much like bride price and bride service developed as a basis for marriage arrangement. A young girl had a relatively "free choice" of her future spouse. But following this selection, her father let it be known to the young man what he expected. The desired payment was often stated in Australian money by the 1950's; some men were asking as much as a hundred pounds for a daughter. (This was a very high sum, since Tiwi males working for the Army received four pounds a week as normal wages.) Other men were asking that their sons-in-law live with them, thus leaving their own parental home, and contribute regularly to the upkeep of the household of the father-in-law. This was, indeed, quite a practical arrangement, for when such a young man went to work in Darwin his wife had to be supervised at home and, further, his employer was supposed to send home to the Mission part of the young man's wages.

Thus, by 1954, the following type of marriage agreement was initiated by the great majority of Tiwi with marriageable daughters, specifically those who centered their activities at Bathurst Island Mission and Garden Point. A young girl chose her future husband from her single, male agemates, sometimes with a suggestion from her father. Her father informed his future son-in-law of the obligations incumbent upon him, which normally included matrilocal postmarital residence and a bride price. An older woman with children, or even one without any offspring, who became a widow, was discouraged from remarrying by her father, if he survived, and by her brother after her father's death. The father or eldest brother of a widow with a daughter reaped the benefits of allowing that daughter to marry the young man whom she desired. The widow herself did not remarry but stayed in the household of her father or brother.

Residence Patterns

By 1953, traditional Tiwi residence patterns had undergone major modifications, some of which have already been mentioned. The old residence areas of the bands had been depopulated; in fact, nearly all the Tiwi were located around one of four European establishments—those at Darwin, Bathurst Island Mission, Garden Point, or Snake Bay. In each of these areas a centralized village pattern had developed. Within the Tiwi communities at Snake Bay, Garden Point, and Bathurst Island Mission there remained a few of the old large households with a polygamous base. But in all these camps the household heads were well past sixty and in most cases past seventy. Polygamous households were dying out by 1953.

But what was replacing them? One might assume that the European pattern of the single family household based upon neolocal residence would have emerged as the new Tiwi system. This was not the case, however. Just as Hart found in 1928-29 that successful Tiwi men were the heads of large establishments, so in 1953-54 the younger male leaders had gathered around

3: Hart E-5 (1928-1929) 1930 OI20 Tiwi OI20

The territory of the *Tiklauila* is roughly contained in the area in the south of Bathurst Island, south of Point Hurd and west of *Mukambrimo*, which is a river about eight miles to the west of the mission station. In this area, roughly about two hundred square miles, there are a number of districts with specific names. Anyone familiar with the Australian blackfellow knows how certain districts are given certain names, and although no native can tell the exact boundaries, everyone in the tribe knows when he has come into one of these districts and when he has left it. The principle of differentiation of these areas seems to be upon the basis of the physical aspect of the country, a valley for example having a distinct name from either set of hills surrounding it, a plain being distinguished from a thickly-wooded piece of bushland on its margin, and so on.

These districts play an important part in Tiwi land ownership. Certain districts are not owned by the horde as a whole, but by a single family of that horde. Thus in the horde we are considering, *Tayio*, the extensive district in the extreme south-western corner of the island around Cape Fouveroy, is owned by a single set of men, all of whom are the son's sons of *Mikidjimirla*, a man who as far as can be judged died about 1870-1880. The basis of their title is the fact that *Mikidjimirla* died and was buried in the district, hence all the game and fruit in *Tayio* belong to them, and cannot be hunted or collected by anyone else without their consent.

The question immediately arises as to whether the mere burial of a man in a district gives his heirs property rights in that district. The Tiwi answer is that it always does if the man was sufficiently important. The man in question here, *Mikidjimirla*, was from all accounts one who left a deep impression on the society of his time both by his personality and by his prowess in warfare. More than that he left his mark on following generations by the number of children he had. At the present time, there are nine men, all grandchildren of *Mikidjimirla*, in whom the hunting and fruit-collecting rights of *Tayio* are vested, and these men and their families normally camp in *Tayio* and deny the right of other *Tiklauila* families to hunt there. This group has a solidarity of its own which is expressed by a name *Tayiauwila*, which is one of the alternative horde-names. It should be noted in this connection that the Tiwi name for father's father is *amini*, and the members of this group will frequently

9:Harney & Elkin E-4, 5 (ca. 1940) 1943 OI20 Tiwi OI20

which is interesting. It means the "Moon People" and is probably the name of the tribe displaced by the Purakapale people in the past. It is Arakitamun-uwi (plural), Arakitamun-ini (masculine), Arakitamun-inga (feminine).

Horde Places. Living in isolated groups, these people talk of horde places. A man from the south of Bathurst Island will tell you he is of the Tikaluwila people, in the horde place of Tikalaru, the country. Thus a man is a Tikaluwinala and a woman is a Tikiluwinila of the country of Tikalaru in the tribe of Worunguwi. (Hart writes Tiklauila).

As it is with this horde so it is with all the groups, three of which are on Bathurst Island; Tikalaru on the south of the Island, Arangu on the north, and Malo on the western shore of the Island. We are not sure of the Melville Island divisions but the following are fairly reliable: Mundiimpu, Anangatera, Yaimpi, being three hordes united as one horde on the southern shore; Turupu and Maruwu, two hordes living as one horde to the north-east of the Island; and Wilarunggu and Munaipu, two hordes living as one local group on the north-west of the Island. (This does not conflict with Hart's list.)

These hordes have indefinite tribal boundaries, yet it is considered a transgression to go too far into them for hunting purposes. One law relating to food gathering is, "He who burns the grass first is considered to own all the food that is caught on that burnt patch; he is a boss as it were and remains such until after the cold weather sets in and the dews bring on a new lot of grass."

Clans. Although the people are divided into numerous hordes they have only three clans (*aramipi*), but each of these clans has a number of sub-totems, *emuya*.[1] These may be survivals of weaker clans or possibly an example of classificatory totemism. Hart calls the *aramipi*, phratries. The totems are:

1. Main totem	*Kudjarli*	Fire
Sub-totems	*Yarinapila*	Red ochre
	Iywati	Honey nest
	Pinkwarui	Stingray
	Ilitui	Tree with red flower
	Woriapila	Sun
2. Main totem	*Tukambani*	Martin
Sub-totems	*Tapitapini*	March fly
	Buŋgaluwila	Stone
	Ariŋguwila	Stone.
3. Main totem	*Miatui*	Pandanus
Sub-totems	*Murukpungama*	Flying fox
	Mudumbila	Mullet
	Mandupowi	Fly
	Andolui	Spring
	Tjilati	Jabaru.

[1] The same name as the gall-bladder and the pulse.

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 OI20 Tiwi OI20

137
343
361

Fig. 1. Snake Bay Settlement

114 Islanders on a hunt. The trip took us to a small clearing on the right bank of the Paluwiunga River, ten miles upstream from where it empties into the Arafura Sea.

131 A brief glance at the map will help to further pinpoint this location. Ten degrees south of the equator and at a distance of twenty to fifty miles due north from the Australian Northern Territory capital of Darwin, lies the relatively large Melville Island (1,000 square miles), named for Viscount Henry Dundas Melville, First Lord of the Admiralty, who authorized the coastal survey of 1818 during which the island was circumnavigated. To the west, separated by a narrow strait, lies the smaller Bathurst 101 Island. The group of people with whom I found myself camped by the river bank were members of the Tiwi, a tribe of Australian [161 Aboriginals whose country includes both these islands. Today about [361 seven hundred members of the tribe live near to the southeast corner 797 of Bathurst Island where they are in various ways administered to by the Sacred Heart Mission. On the northern coast of Melville 161 Island, on a hill overlooking Snake Bay, near the mouth of the

361
C48

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 0120 Tiwi 0120

Tjipripu River, stands the Snake Bay Native Settlement where about 180-200 natives live along with two or three white employees of the Department of Welfare of the Australian Government and their families.

It was not always like this. Formerly there were no white men and the tribe lived scattered throughout the entire countryside. The land was divided into "countries," each owned by a division of the tribe, and providing the owners with all necessary food, clothing, and shelter. Although many changes have come to the tribe in the last fifty years through contact with the early buffalo shooters, the missionaries, and the government, the individual Tiwi is, with few exceptions, a hunter at heart. He may have acquired new skills such as a knowledge of English, and the ability to work at cutting lumber in the sawmill or driving a truck, but in doing so he has not lost the skill to track down the wallabies or possums in the bush or fish in the sea, nor has he lost the desire to do so. There are, of course, exceptions—those who prefer working in the settlement or in Darwin and attempt to make their own way into the white man's world. A few are successful and never return; others, not so successful, try it for a while and return to alternate between doing their bit in the settlement and going on "vacation" into the bush when they feel the need of a change of pace.

By the end of October I too felt the need of a change of scene. I had been living at the settlement or close to it for seven months. I had watched the Tiwi as they built the settlement buildings, started formal schooling and helped run the everyday affairs of a community of two hundred souls. I had watched them in the evenings when they often performed portions of their lengthy ceremonies necessary to the proper burial of a fellow tribal member. I had accompanied them on weekends whenever they had camped in the surrounding countryside, and had gathered and consumed the tasty native food as a variation to corned beef, vegetables, flour, tea, and sugar of the settlement menu. But after seven months I too grew tired of corned beef, and as the daily increasing humidity announced the approach of the wet season I was anxious to go hunting once more before travel became difficult. Another sign of the approaching change of seasons, observed with great interest by the natives,

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 O120 Tiwi O120

123
equally entertaining as she sang some risqué love songs she had 533
picked up around camp.

The evening's goose hunt was even more unsuccessful than the 123
earlier hunts. Two of the men separated and went down river and
killed three geese, but the others, upstream in the usual place, did 223
not even see any, and there was more talk of *mobudities* by everyone
way into the night.

The following day was the last and, as the Assistant Super- 123
intendent was due that evening, feverish work was done by one
and all on the long neglected house. Evidently the arrival of Paul 648
scared off the ghosts, for that evening we almost had a goose per
person, and my final memory of Minianapi is one of flickering fires
in the moonlight and the smell of fresh roasted goose carried on
the gentle breezes.

133
361 ●

Fig. 21. After the return trip the launch's motor gets a much needed overhaul